Thomas the Rhymour

True Thomas lay o'er yon grassy bank
And beheld a lady gay,
A lady that was brisk and bold,
Come riding o'er the ferny brae.

Her skirt was of the grass-green silk,
Her mantle of the velvet fine,
At ev'ry knot of her horse's mane
Hung fifty silver bells and nine.

True Thomas, he took off his hat
And bowed him low down to his knee:
"All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
For your peer on earth I never did see."

"Oh no, oh no, True Thomas," she says,
"That name does not belong to me;
I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
And I'm here for to visit thee...

"But you may go with me now, Thomas,
True Thomas, you may go with me,
For you may serve me seven years,
Through weal or woe as may chance to be."

She turned about her milk-white steed,
And took True Thomas up behind,
And always when her bridal rang,
The steed flew faster than the wind.

For forty days and forty nights
He wade through red blood to the knee,
And he saw neither sun nor moon,
But heard the roaring of the sea.

O they rode on and further on
Until they came to a garden tree.
"Light down, light down, you lady free,
Some of that fruit let me pull to thee."

"Oh no, oh no, True Thomas," she says
"That fruit may not be touched by thee
For all the plagues that are in Hell
Light on the fruit of this country.

"But I have a loaf here in my lap,
Likewise a bottle of claret wine,
And now ere we go further on
We'll rest awhile and you may dine."

When he had eaten and drunk his fill,
"Lay your head down upon my knee,"

The lady said, "ere we climb that hill,
And I will show you fair gifts three.

"Oh see not you that narrow road
So beset with thorns and briars?
That is the path of righteousness,
'Though after it but few inquires.

"And see not you that bonny road
Which winds about the green barrow?
That is the road to fair Elfland
Where you and I this night may go.

"And see you not that twisting road,
Which winds along that lilied leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
'Though some call it the road to Heaven

"But Thomas, you must hold your tongue
Whatever you hear or see,
For if a word you chance to speak,
You will ne'er get back to your own country."

He has gotten a coat of even cloth
And a pair of shoes of velvet green
And 'til seven years were past and gone
True Thomas, on earth, was never seen.

--Traditional (Scott Simpson)

I modified the spelling and occasionally chose a more modern word. The "Queen of Heaven" is, by the way, the Christian Mary, wife of Joseph, virgin mother of Jesus. In medieval theologies she held an exalted position as the merciful aspect of the Christian pantheon. However, the Lady of the poem doesn't want to be mistaken for her.□